

Early Childhood Education and Out-of-School Time Workforce Recruiting Guide

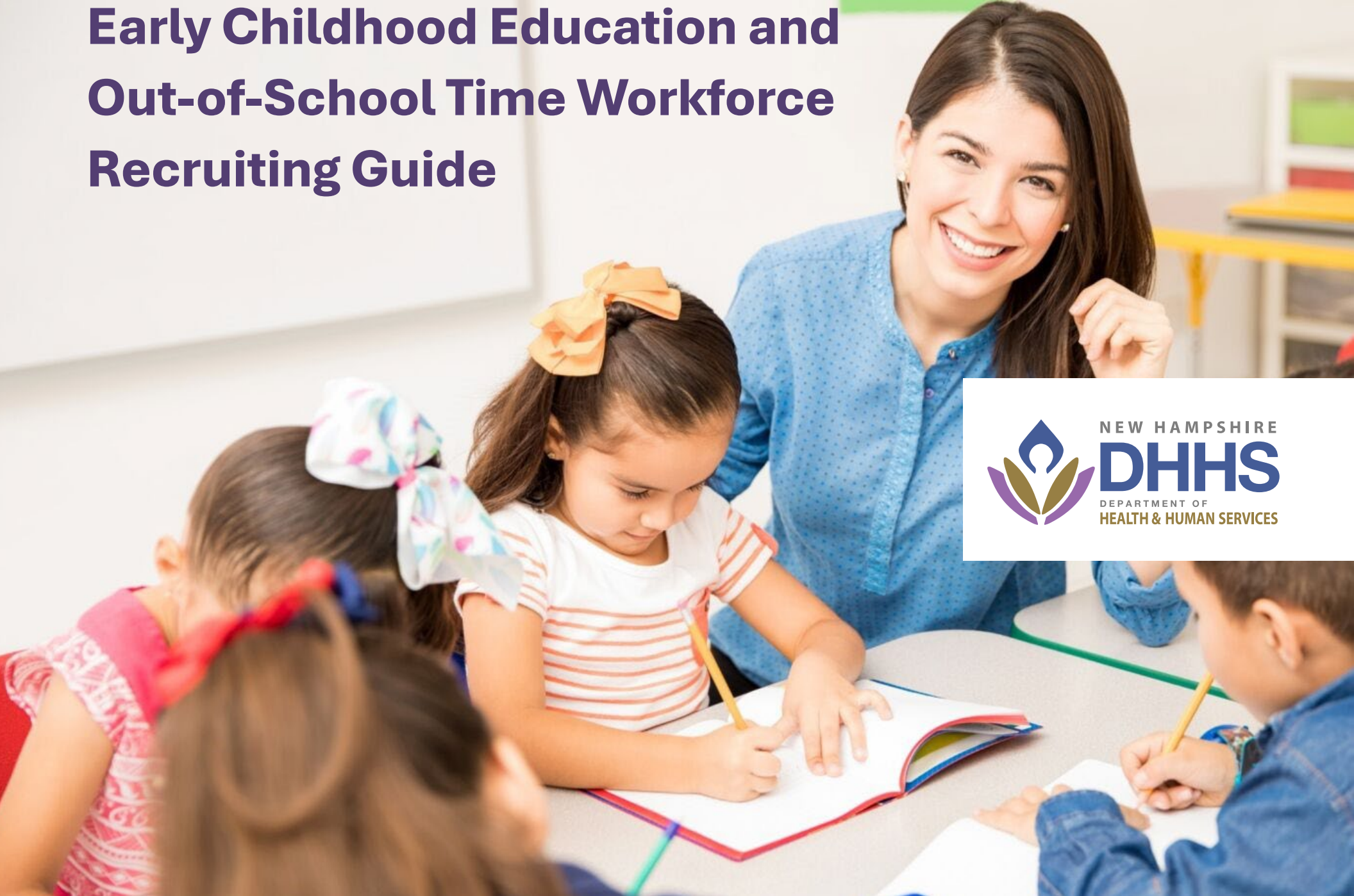
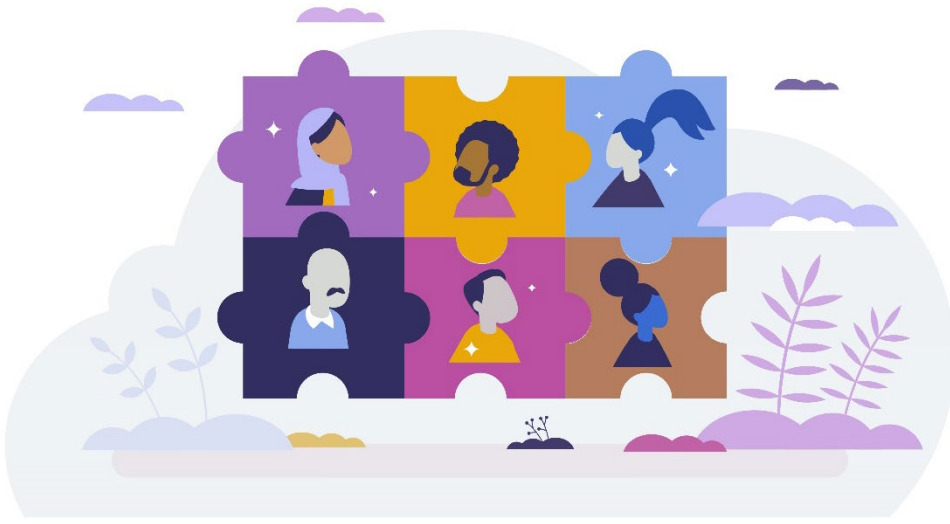


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I. Introduction

It is well documented that high quality early education leads to positive outcomes for children enrolled in these programs¹. A contributing factor to these outcomes that cannot be overlooked is staff stability. Without a stable workforce, children experience a patchwork of care provided by different educators depending on current availability, instead of experience and education as primary factors.

There has been a lot of conversation about the number of staff leaving the early childhood education and out-of-school time field. There are numerous factors contributing to this shift in the workforce including wage inequities, burdensome administrative requirements, mental health challenges, lack of parental involvement, and limited growth opportunities. According to a report published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in 2021, more than one-third of survey participants indicated that they planned to leave the field or close their family childcare homes within the next year².

Despite this new reality, there are promising efforts emerging as strategies to recruit and retain staff. The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is committed to providing solutions that address current challenges that the field must overcome to

¹ Doyle, O., Logue, C. & McNamara, K. (2011). Readiness to implement a National Quality Framework: Evidence from Irish early childhood care, and education centers. *Child Care in Practice*, 17(2), 163-164

² T.E.A.C.H. National Center & Child Care Association. (2021). A Closer Look at Salary /Wage Scales for Early Childhood Workforce. [CCSA 2021 Salary-Scale-White-Paper-FINAL.pdf \(teachecnationalcenter.org\)](#)

support student success. These efforts are designed to increase the supply of high-quality early education programming that is available, accessible, and sustainable. The agency has three overarching goals related to recruitment and retention. These include the following:

1. Help qualified job seekers secure employment in the childcare field.
2. Equip providers with the tools to increase recruitment and retention.
3. Understand the issues that matter most to the childcare workforce.

By strengthening early childhood education and out-of-school time workforce strategies like professional development, teacher engagement, and the provision of wellness resources, DHHS is making meaningful contributions to recruitment and retention efforts occurring throughout the nation. As part of their professional development initiative, DHHS is developing webinars, e-learning modules, and in-person training to address knowledge gaps and provide growth opportunities within the childcare field. Developing relevant and timely content for educators is crucial to building a strong workforce. DHHS recognizes the importance of human-centered design, meaning that they value the voices and input from those working directly in the field. As such, the agency conducts surveys and focus groups to learn more about the needs in the field.

Additionally, DHHS provides wellness resources to teachers. A recent study conducted by RAND Corps. indicates that early childhood educators are more likely to experience job-related stress and symptoms of depression than the general population. In fact, these issues occur two to three times more than their peers³. Key stressors during the pandemic included hybrid (remote and in-person teaching), remote teaching, and changes to instructional models⁴. Most programs have discontinued both hybrid and remote offerings, however, educators' stress has not decreased. A nationwide survey of over 2,300 early childhood educators found that nearly half experienced persistent stress and burnout⁵. Child care programs have implemented several strategies to mitigate these health challenges including but not limited to offering mindfulness training, wellness programming, mental health days, and coverage for personal time off.

There is no one size fits all remedy that will solve the challenges faced by child care programs. Customized solutions are necessary to address the nuanced recruitment and retention needs of programs. With that in mind, DHHS will pilot several promising practices to determine the efficacy, scalability, and sustainability of each approach.

Purpose of this Guide

DHHS has created this guide to support your recruitment and retention efforts with the hope that it will help you attract promising candidates, and maintain continuity of services and the sustainability of your program. Throughout this document, you will be invited to engage in self-reflection exercises designed to support intentional and pro-active action. You are encouraged to review these with your

³ Will, M. (2021, June 15). Teachers are more likely to experience depression symptoms than other adults. *Education Week*

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Modan, N. (2022, Oct 10). 45% of early childhood educators report high burnout, stress. *K-12 Dive*

leadership team to identify the recruitment and retention strategies that are working in your program, and where there are areas for improvement. You will also find links to resources and templates that can be helpful to your program.

Introductory Reflections

Before we move forward, let's take a moment to reflect on your current recruitment and retention practices as well as how you support the professional development and wellness of your team. Your answers will help you identify areas where you can either improve or build upon.

Recruitment and Retention Reflection Questions



- How has your program approached recruitment and retention?
- What recruitment strategies has your program used? Which have proven to be successful? How do you know?
- How does your program ensure that recruitment includes a pool of diverse candidates?
- Which retention strategies has your program implemented? Which have been successful? How do you know?
- What resources do you currently use to help inform your efforts in recruitment and retention?
- Do you have a designated individual to lead recruitment and retention efforts? If so, what duties are assigned to them?
- How do you currently track recruitment efforts or turnover in your program?



Resource(s)

[Recruiting-and-Hiring-Child-Care-Staff.pdf \(childcareaware.org\)](#)

[Recruiting and Retaining Culturally Responsive Staff in Early Childhood Education Settings - Child Care Aware](#)

Ongoing Support Questions



- What does professional development look like in your program? (Examples: webinars, e-learning modules, in-person training, on the job training, apprenticeship, communities of practice, etc.)
- Is your team aware of the professional development opportunities provided through Child Care Aware of New Hampshire?
- What mode(s) of delivery work best for your team? Which days and times?
- Is attendance in training mandatory? If so, is it tied to compensation, bonuses, etc.?
- Is professional development required for all staff? If so, how frequently must staff attend PD?
- Have you established minimum professional development hours required for each position in your program?

**Resource(s)**

[Professional Development - Child Care Aware of NH \(nh-connections.org\)](#)
[Professional Development | NAEYC](#)

Staff Engagement Reflection Questions



- What does engagement look like in your program?
- List up to three examples of how your leadership team has sought input or feedback from staff. (Examples: Feedback surveys, physical feedback stations, 1:1's, annual reviews, etc.)
- How is feedback acknowledged and how does it inform program practices? What is the feedback loop once input has been gathered?

**Resource(s)**

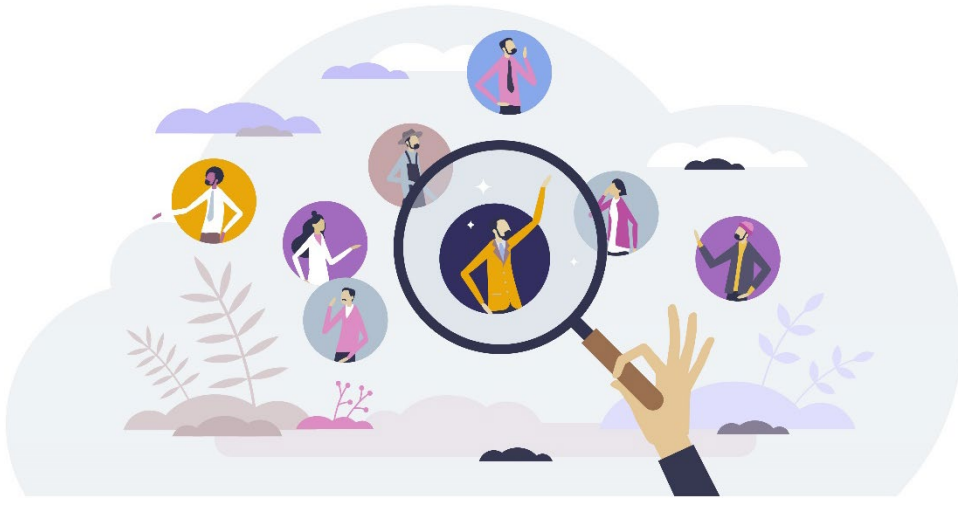
Wellness Support Reflection Questions



- What wellness support(s) does your program provide to staff, if any?
- How were these supports determined to be relevant and meaningful to staff?
- What practices is the program using to support wellness? (Examples: Yoga, Employee Assistance Program, exercise programs, meal programs, childcare benefits, mental health/personal days, etc.)
- Are staff encouraged to engage in wellness activities to support their mental health?

**Resource(s)**

[53 Easy Ways for Early Childhood Educators to Prioritize Mental Health in 2023 \(mybrightwheel.com\)](#)



II. Defining Workforce Recruiting

According to the [Society for Human Resource Management \(SHRM\)](#), recruitment is defined as all aspects of hiring new individuals to work for a company. It includes attracting, identifying and engaging candidates; ensuring qualifications and assessing background information; interviewing and selecting a quality candidate for hire; and making a job offer. Onboarding a new employee is often considered part of the recruiting process.

Staff turnover is quite costly due to costs associated with advertising, interviewing, onboarding, and ongoing training. The average cost per new hire is \$4,700 according to data released by SHRM⁶. Ideally, staff will stay with a program for a long period of time, but this is not always the case. While you can't prevent turnover from happening, there is a way to avoid lengthy disruptions to your program. One of the simplest things your program can do to avoid negative consequences to students and families is to have an effective recruitment plan in place.

Recruitment Plan

A recruitment plan outlines your program's strategy for recruiting and hiring staff. To develop an effective plan, you will need to assess the current state of your recruitment process and consider upcoming hiring needs. This includes thinking about program expansion, potential turnover, skill gaps, and any new positions you might create.

You will also want to know your unique selling proposition. There are many programs that may also be recruiting staff for open positions.

⁶ Navarra, K. (2022, April 11). The real cost of recruitment. *Society of Human Resource Management* [The Real Costs of Recruitment \(shrm.org\)](#)

You will want to have a clear understanding of your program’s mission and what makes your program different from others so you can share this information with candidates.

It is important that your program identifies your recruiting goals. For example, do you want to increase a specific skillset or develop a more diverse team? Or maybe reducing the cost is the driving factor. Once you have identified your goals, you should create a timeline for the hiring process.

Before posting a position, you will want to create a job description that aligns with the needs of your program. The following checklist will help aid you in the development of position descriptions:

Job Descriptions



- Does the job description include the role of the position?
- Is there an overview of the program?
- Has a general description of the position been provided?
- Is it clear who will be supervising the position?
- Are the key responsibilities clearly outlined?
- Are the required knowledge, skills, and experience requirements clearly outlined?
- Are minimum licensing requirements for the position met?
- Are the educational and physical requirements listed?
- Is the job description compliant with local, state, and federal laws?
- Are required background checks listed?
- Is the wage range provided?
- Is information on benefits included?



Resource(s)

[Assistant Teacher Job Description \[Updated for 2023\] \(indeed.com\)](#)
[Preschool Teacher Job Description \[Updated for 2023\] \(indeed.com\)](#)
[Preschool Director Job Description \(betterteam.com\)](#)

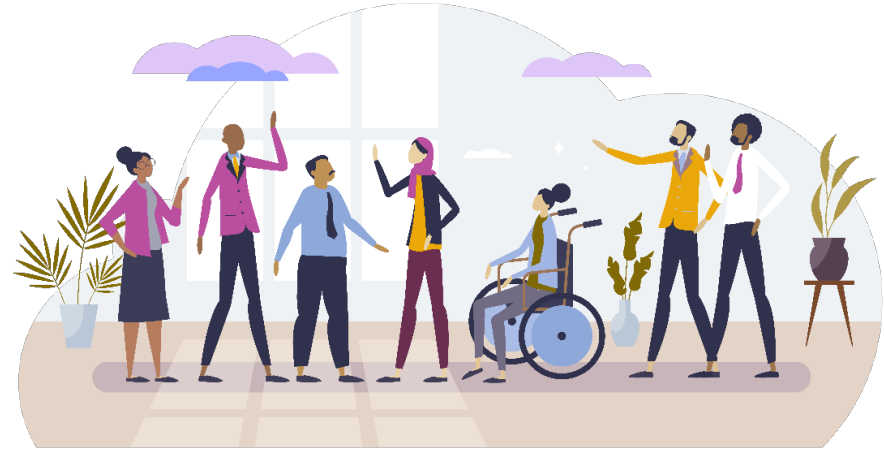
You are encouraged to determine how your program will remain objective and consistent when screening job applications and interviewing based on defined job requirements. This will ensure a fair evaluation of candidates. It is a good idea to keep a record of all activities associated with the hiring process. This will help ensure the transparency of the hiring process and provide a system for your program to track recruitment efforts.

Once you have all this in place, you can begin thinking about the recruitment channels you will use to find qualified candidates. You will also want to consider what the onboarding process will look like to ensure that new employees are properly trained for their position.

Candidate Diversity

By proactively developing a recruitment plan, you can quickly begin sourcing a high-quality pipeline of potential applicants. Instead of focusing on creating a plan, you can spend time attracting candidates with solid experience and an appropriate educational background for the open position. SHRM highlighted research that shows that the average time to fill vacancies is approximately 44 days. Without an effective recruitment plan this can take much longer.

One thing you may want to consider is recruiting from a diverse pool of candidates. Diversity amongst staff can lead to positive outcomes for your program because it will enable you to serve the specific needs of your surrounding community. For example, a childcare program in a predominantly Spanish speaking community would best serve potential families by having a staff member who can speak their language. This would decrease barriers to access and utilization of the service. So how can you promote increased diversity in your hiring pool? Consider recruiting members from the following groups:



Males

Research shows that approximately 3% of preschool teachers are men (NAEYC)⁷. Your program can help increase their participation in the workforce through active recruitment. You can accomplish this by creating tailored flyers and posting content on social media with male imagery and explicitly indicating that you are hiring male teachers. As with other recruitment materials, you can share this with friends, family, staff members, parents, and community members for distribution. You can let fathers of children in your program know that you are recruiting men and ask them to share this information with others who may be interested.



Immigrants

The DHHS sponsors a refugee program to help refugees move towards economic self-sufficiency and social integration. One of the components of the program includes employment services. You can advertise your job posting through this channel to garner interest from immigrants within the community.



Grandparents

There are many individuals who are retired but would like to return to the workforce in some capacity. Like the campaign to recruit men, you can create one specifically targeting grandparents. You are encouraged to use imagery and language that reflects their age and value for their lived experiences.

⁷ Cole, K., Plaisir, J., Reich-Shapiro, M., Frietas, A. (2019). Building a gender-balanced workforce: Supporting male teachers. *Young Children*, 74(4). <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/sept2019/building-gender-balanced-workforce-supporting-male-teachers>

**Parents**

Some parents may be unemployed or under-employed, so an opportunity to work in your program may be a perfect fit for them. You can share recruitment flyers and post them on the classroom bulletin board to build awareness.

**High School Students**

Recruiting from this group will diversify the age of workers in your program. Given that they will just be starting out in the field, they may be even more receptive to training and new ideas than other age groups.

**Religious Institutions**

Most communities have religious institutions of varying faiths. You can distribute flyers at these locations to attract individuals from different walks of life.

Here are some other actions you are encouraged to take:

Create Inclusive Job Descriptions

Draft job descriptions that emphasize qualifications and skills rather than demographic characteristics that may prevent certain applicants from applying. Federal laws prohibit employment discrimination, which includes protected classes such as race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, and genetic information. For example, you might highlight that experience in the and out-of-school time field is required. You would not say that a specific ethnicity or gender is required.

Expand Sourcing Channels

As referenced above, you should use a variety of recruiting channels. These channels should reach a broad array of communities to increase the likelihood that you have diverse applicants applying. Also, when developing recruitment materials, be sure to include diverse and representative images.

Diverse Interview Panels

Ensure interview panels include individuals from diverse backgrounds to minimize bias and provide different perspectives regarding candidates. For example, you may ask a parent volunteer who is interested in serving on the committee.

Track and Analyze Data

Collect and analyze data on the demographics of applicants, hires, and promotions to identify any disparities or areas for improvement.

Overall, promoting diversity requires an ongoing commitment to an inclusive mindset and ongoing reflection throughout the process.

Recruitment Channels

In previous years, as employees resigned, child care programs might solely recruit from a local community college's early childhood education program, post an ad on a local job board, or rely on online recruiting tools like Indeed. However, times have changed. Fewer students are enrolling in early childhood degree programs both in community college and universities⁸. As a result, it is often difficult to rely on these sources alone. It is necessary to explore alternative pipelines to fill vacant positions within the current hiring context. The following are other recruitment strategies that you may want to consider:



Local High Schools

Reach out to local high schools as a source of recruitment. This is an excellent way to reach young people who are beginning to explore career opportunities. You can approach the principal at a particular school to learn about ways you can share information about early childhood education with the student body or attend job or hiring events.



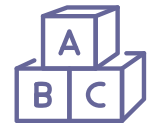
Local Senior Citizen Organizations

Explore opportunities to recruit retired individuals who may be interested in returning to the workforce to supplement their income. Leads may be found by delivering a presentation at a local community senior citizen facility or posting to a community bulletin board. There may also be opportunities to recruit via channels like American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) or a similar organization.



Local Childcare Organizations

Contact local childcare organizations or associations and inquire about any job boards they may offer or networking events they host where you can meet potential candidates.



⁸ Bell, L. (2019, September 20). Is early childhood education a viable career option for community college students?. EdNC. <https://www.ednc.org/is-early-childhood-education-a-viable-career-option-for-community-college-students/>

Social Media

Use social media to advertise open positions. Thousands of people use platforms like TikTok, Instagram, or Facebook and most of these platforms have niche audiences. For example, Facebook has many groups that are solely dedicated to early childhood education, or mom groups that may have connections to parents that are looking to re-enter the workforce after maternity leave. You can join one of these groups and post relevant job opportunities there (barring any restrictions enforced by the group). You can also use Instagram or TikTok to create engaging posts with relevant hashtags like #childcare, #hiring, #toddlers. You can share heartwarming or funny stories about your childcare and out-of-school time program. It is strongly suggested that you invite your followers to share your job listing with their networks. Having a robust social media presence and page will draw attention to your program and encourage followers to share content.



Community Centers and Libraries

Contact community centers, libraries, and other local gathering places. Many of these organizations often have bulletin boards where you can advertise your job openings.



Staff Referrals

One of the easiest ways to promote your job opening is to enlist the help of your current staff. It is quite possible that they have contacts who may be interested and a good fit for your available positions. It is highly encouraged for you to offer incentives or referral bonuses to increase their participation in the referral program.



Online Parenting Forums or Groups

As mentioned above, it may be useful to join online groups to spread the word about your vacancies. But don't restrict your presence to popular platforms. You can also find online groups geared toward childcare on MeetUp or similar sites. You can post about your job opening or just engage in conversation to build awareness and a reputation about your program.



Job Fairs or Career Events

A traditional way to recruit is to participate in local job fairs or career events that focus on childcare or general education. This allows you an opportunity to meet individuals who have a strong interest in the early childhood education and out-of-school time field. See below for a helpful database on recruitment fairs and events.



**Resource(s)**

[New Hampshire Job Fair and Recruitment Event Portal - NHES Job Database](#)

As you can see, there is a lot that goes into recruitment planning. Here is a checklist to help you navigate the process:

Pre-recruitment Checklist



- Do you have a clear understanding of your program’s mission and what makes it unique? Are you prepared to talk about this and “sell” your program to perspective candidates?
- Does your program have a recruitment plan in place?
- Have you assessed the current and future needs of your program?
- Have you looked at past data to support where you have had recruitment success and could target future efforts?
- Have you identified recruiting goals?
- Do you have a hiring timeline established?
- Do you have a job description developed for vacant position(s) that complies with local, state, and federal laws?
- Do you have a screening and interview process in place?
- Do you have a recordkeeping system in place to organize data collected throughout the hiring process?
- What recruitment channels will you use?
- Are you recruiting from a diverse pool of candidates?
- Do you have a way to keep in contact with perspective and/or interested candidates even if a current vacancy doesn’t exist?

Professionalism and Communication

There is a saying that you only get one time to make a first impression. This is true for your program as well. It is essential that your initial contact with an applicant conveys your professionalism. Some of the ways that this can be demonstrated are through the dissemination of timely and accurate information, responsiveness to inquiries, and tone when communicating with applicants. In addition to being professional, the communication should convey warmth and interest in the applicant.

From the beginning, the hiring personnel should clearly explain the communication channels applicants should use to provide information. They should understand to whom they should direct any follow-up



correspondence. The program's contact will vary based on who is leading the hiring process. In some instances, this may be the director of the program or a representative from HR. The program should also ask the applicant to share the best methods to reach them. Some applicants prefer to be contacted via phone while others may be easier to reach via text or e-mail.

It is important to maintain ongoing communication with applicants throughout the hiring process. As much as possible, personalize the communication sent to applicants. This is not always an option if your program receives a high volume of applicants, in which case, a template may be a better option. If an applicant is not selected for a position, they should be notified of your decision. A decision should be made as quickly as possible for those who remain on the list of potential applications. When the hiring process is too long, this may impact an applicant's ability to pursue other opportunities.

Both the indoor and outdoor of your program should be clean and visually appealing. For example, the outside should be free of clutter and the landscape should be presentable. You should also have good signage that is clearly visible and easy to read. Indoors should meet all licensing requirements related to health and safety.

Not only do you want to make a good first impression, but you also want to leave a lasting one. To accomplish this, you can give a prospective candidate a tour of your program and have materials for them to take that showcase your program and provide contact information.

Interview Process

It is highly encouraged that the program use a structured and standardized interview process to assess candidates. It is best practice to prepare a set of consistent interview questions that relate directly to the job requirements. Candidates should be scored based on established criteria.

Here is a checklist of things you should have in place prior to conducting interviews.



Pre-interview Checklist



- Select an individual to conduct pre-screening calls.
- Select an interview committee to review selection criteria.
- Develop standardized screening and interview questions.
- Determine the interview format (i.e., in person or virtual, group or individual, etc., location, and duration).
- Identify the recordkeeping and documentation protocols.
- Determine who will notify candidates of their status.

Before inviting a candidate to an interview, it is highly suggested that the hiring personnel conduct a phone screening to vet them. Here are sample phone screening questions that you can ask:

Phone Screening Questions



- Can you share why you are looking for employment?
- Please explain why you think you are a good fit for this position.
- What aspects of our program drew you to apply for this position?
- Please provide examples from previous roles that highlight your ability to perform well in this role.
- Tell me about your experience working at one of your previous employers. What is your most memorable accomplishment?

You can develop a rating system to score the responses. These can vary from a numeric system of one to five or a colored-coded system like green, yellow, and red. Scoring the responses from the pre-screening interview will help you determine who should move forward in the process. The coding system can also be used to score interview questions.

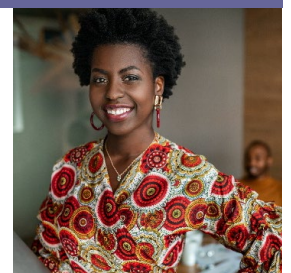
For the actual interview, you are encouraged to use a blend of behavioral and situational questions. Behavioral questions can help you better understand how the candidate has handled actual situations in their past. Whereas situational questions ask candidates how they would deal with specific types of situations in the future. For example, a potential behavioral question would be, “How have you addressed parent concerns in the past?” A situational question would be, “Let’s suppose that a parent is upset that you forgot to tell them that their child had an upsetting day in the classroom. How would you handle this?”

Here are some example interview questions for common roles in child care settings:

Sample Interview Questions by Position

Center Director

- Why do you want to work for our childcare specifically?
- What are some successful administration strategies you have used? Were they successful?
- What is your approach to conflict and disagreement at work?
- What kind of leadership experience do you have in childcare settings?
- What kind of experience do you have in managing a budget?
- Explain how you have created and implemented new policies for a childcare center in the past.
- Describe a challenging disciplinary situation you handled successfully in the past. What about your solution worked well?
- How would you handle a challenging interaction with a parent?



- How will you cultivate community relationships?
- How will you support the staff you supervise in their daily work?
- What is the most challenging part of managing a center?

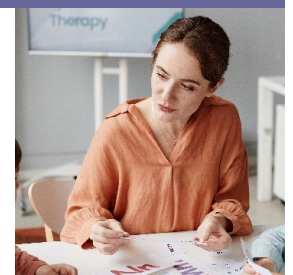
Early Childhood Teacher

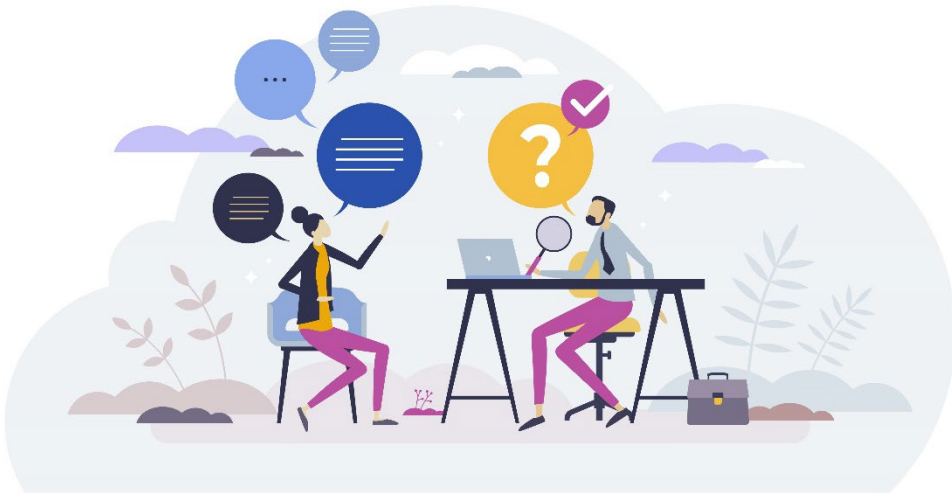
- What are your priorities as a teacher?
- What do you think one of the greatest difficulties facing teachers today is?
- How have you planned and implemented curriculum in previous roles?
- How do you approach planning with your colleagues?
- What was your most challenging day as a teacher? How did you handle it?
- How would you respond to classroom behavioral issues?
- How would you resolve a conflict with a parent or colleague?
- Describe the activities and methods you would use to connect with families.



Early Childhood Assistant Teacher

- How much experience do you have working with children 0-5?
- What experience do you have working with children with special needs?
- Describe your experience working with a lead teacher in the classroom.
- How would you handle a disagreement with a colleague?
- What have you recently done to increase your skills?
- What methods have you used to maintain and manage cleanliness, order, and available materials in an early childhood classroom?





III. Discussing with Prospective Candidates the Profession

Professional Opportunities

Individuals who are new to the field may not know all the professional opportunities that exist within the early childhood education and out-of-school time profession. While they may be selected to work in your program, it is still a great opportunity to share more information with them. New Hampshire offers a variety of ways for individuals to join the workforce. The various types of programs range from public and private pre-kindergarten, childcare centers, family childcare homes, Head Start programs, childcare and referral agencies, in-home care, and private preschool programs. There are many career opportunities within the early childhood field including:

- Early Childhood Education Center Administrators and Directors
- Family Specialists and Counselors
- Technical Assistance Specialists
- Professional Development Specialists and Trainers
- Consultants
- Researchers
- Early Childhood Mental Health Professionals
- Early Childhood Program Officers
- Program Managers

- Higher Education Faculty, and
- State agency staff

More information about these roles can be found here: [NH-EC-Careers-Directory-June-2021.pdf \(nh-connections.org\)](https://www.nh-connections.org/files/2021/06/NH-EC-Careers-Directory-June-2021.pdf)

National Childcare Organizations

Potential hires should also be made aware of professional organizations and affiliations like New Hampshire Child Care Aware ([Child Care Aware® of New Hampshire | SNHS](https://www.nh-connections.org/files/2021/06/NH-EC-Careers-Directory-June-2021.pdf)), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) [NAEYC](https://www.naeyc.org/), the National Head Start Association (NHAS) [Home - NHSA](https://www.nhas.org/), or the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) [National Association for Family Child Care – Your Home. Your Profession. Our Commitment. \(nafcc.org\)](https://www.nafcc.org/). These organizations can provide candidates with greater insight into the field and help them learn about new research and trends.

Professional Development

Child Care Aware of New Hampshire provides training and professional development opportunities from September to June to support providers as they develop their competencies. Here is the link to the professional development site: [Professional Development - Child Care Aware of NH \(nh-connections.org\)](https://www.nh-connections.org/files/2021/06/NH-EC-Careers-Directory-June-2021.pdf). Additionally, they facilitate the Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program [Home - Child Care Aware of NH \(nh-connections.org\)](https://www.nh-connections.org/files/2021/06/NH-EC-Careers-Directory-June-2021.pdf).



Scholarships & Tuition Assistance

It is also a good idea to share information about T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood New Hampshire's scholarship program. Eligibility requirements include enrollment in courses at local colleges while working at least 30 hours per week. There are scholarships available for teachers or family childcare providers to attain an Associate's degree. There is also support for teachers in licensed child care programs as they work towards a Child Development Associate Credential. [T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarships | SNHS](https://www.nh-connections.org/files/2021/06/NH-EC-Careers-Directory-June-2021.pdf)

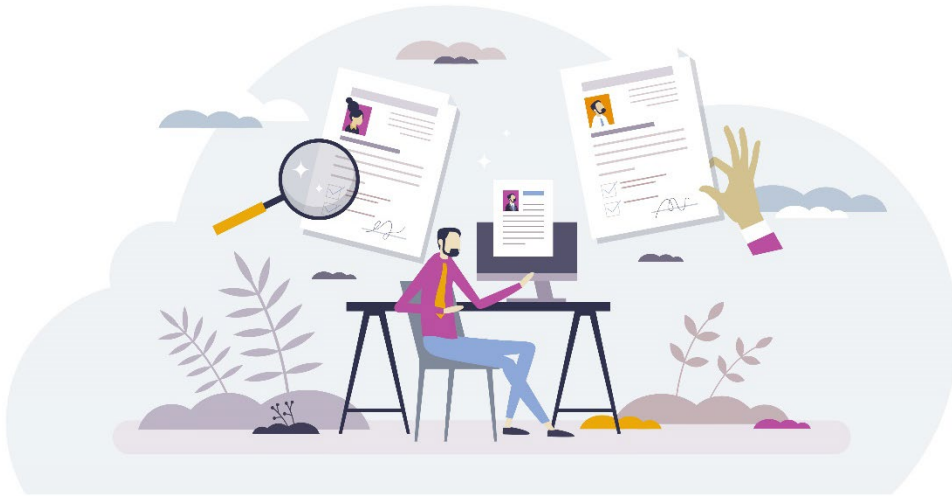
Additionally, New Hampshire offers Early Childhood and Out-of-School Time tuition assistance through the University of New Hampshire College of Professional Studies and Community College system of New Hampshire. The goal of the program is to enable individuals to increase their knowledge and skills, while working in the field of Early Childhood Education and in licensed Out-of-School Time programs. More information can be found at this link: [Early Childhood Education Tuition Assistance - Community College System of New Hampshire \(ccsnh.edu\)](https://www.nh-connections.org/files/2021/06/NH-EC-Careers-Directory-June-2021.pdf)

Competencies

You are encouraged to share information about the core knowledge and competencies expected of those working in New Hampshire's early childhood space. More information about core knowledge competencies and credentials can be found at the following links:

[Competencies - Child Care Aware of NH \(nh-connections.org\)](https://www.nh-connections.org/competencies) and [New Hampshire Early Childhood Professional Development System Guidebook \(nh-connections.org\)](https://www.nh-connections.org/new-hampshire-early-childhood-professional-development-system-guidebook).

Prospective candidates should also be given information about the NH Connections Information System (NHCIS) Professional Registry so they can create a profile: NHCIS Professional Registry - Child Care Aware of NH ([nh-connections.org](https://www.nh-connections.org))



IV. Workforce Recruiting Strategies

Where to Find Qualified Candidates

When we think about finding a qualified candidate for our childcare program, we think about a candidate who is a good:

- **“Job fit”**- meaning they have the skills and education to do the job.
- **“Organizational fit”**- meaning their values, attitudes, communication styles, and teamwork abilities match the culture of our program.

An ideal candidate is both a good “job fit” and a good “organizational fit”, but remember, job skills and education can be gained over time. Even if a candidate hasn’t worked specifically in childcare before, they may still be a qualified candidate based on their similar work experience or their interest in learning about early education.

So, where do you find these candidates?

The table below describes some strategies for finding qualified candidates.

Word of Mouth

Be sure you are talking with people in your existing social circles to let them know about the open positions and the benefits of working at your program. This includes:



- Current employees
- Parents of children enrolled in your program
- Parents of children formerly enrolled in your program
- Your family
- Your friends
- Others you come into contact with who may ask about your work. This could be your dentist during your check-up, your hairdresser at your next appointment, the postal delivery person who stops by the program, the staff at your child's school, etc.

You never know who may be looking for a new career opportunity, or if someone in their social circle is looking for this type of opportunity.

Building a Pipeline

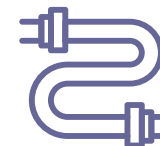
Does your program offer any opportunities to start as a volunteer or intern?

If “No”, consider setting up a program where individuals could start as a volunteer.

By providing the opportunity for someone to be involved as a volunteer and experience what it is like to work in childcare, they may become interested in applying for a part-time or full-time position in the future. This also gives your program the chance to see how the individual works with children and your staff.

Is your program located near a high school, community college, or university? There may be the opportunity to partner with their early childhood or child development program and offer internship opportunities (with a low stipend, or unpaid).

If “Yes”, are there any volunteers or interns who may be interested in joining the team part or full-time?



Your Community

Every community where a childcare program is located is unique and may offer specific populations where you could recruit childcare staff. For example:

- A childcare program is located near a high school; there may be students looking for part-time jobs or volunteer hours.
- A childcare program is located within a retirement community; there may be retirees looking for ways to make an impact in their community.
- A childcare program is located near a military base; there may be military spouses or older children of service members who are looking for a job.
- A childcare program is located in a community where refugees have recently been relocated; there may be new residents looking for a job.



What is unique about the community where your program is located?

Who in your community may be looking for a job that you could outreach to?

Partnerships with Local Organizations

Another strategy is to partner and build relationships with local organizations or businesses that may support your recruitment efforts. For example:

- The local library, church, or small businesses (like a local coffee shop) may allow you to post recruitment flyers or be open to including your job notice in their community newsletters.
- A local newspaper or radio station may be looking for content or advertising information.
- A local unemployment office, human services office, or veteran's affairs office may be open to sharing information with the populations they serve.



What local organizations do you currently have a relationship with where they may be able to support you in your recruitment efforts?

What new organizations or local business would you like to start a relationship with?

To summarize:

- You never know who in your community or social circles is looking for a new career or job in childcare.
- As a program leader, always be prepared to share with those in your network about your program and the benefits of working there.
- Work to grow your network so you can reach more people who may be looking for a job.

Using data to inform job recruiting efforts

Your time and energy are precious! When it comes to recruiting, we want to work smarter, not harder. This is why using data to inform your job recruiting efforts is so important. By taking a little bit of time to track your efforts, you can start to see what job recruiting efforts are most effective and which are wasting your time and energy.

So, how do you do this?

1. **Reflect on current staff.** Think about those who are currently employed in your program. How did they come to find out about this job? If you don't know, consider asking them so you have this helpful information for future decision making.

What do you notice about their responses? These may give you ideas on where to recruit in the future. For example, if 3 of your 5 current staff learned about this job from an ad in the newspaper, you may want to continue advertising in the newspaper. Or if most staff learned about this job from another staff member, you may want to focus your efforts on word-of-mouth recruiting (with a potential referral bonus to the staff who is finding these candidates).

2. **Track your current recruitment.** The next time you need to post a job, write down where you've posted the job notice so you are able to track its effectiveness. This could be done in a handwritten notebook or in an excel document; the goal is to use a tracking tool you are most comfortable with.
 - a. When an applicant reaches out to you to learn more about the job, or you are in the interview process, ask the applicant how they heard about the job and track their response in your tracking tool.
 - b. Once a hiring decision has been made, review your tracking tool.

When you review the tracker, what do you notice? For example, look at the sample tracker and consider, what was the most effective strategy for hiring staff? What strategy had no responses and could possibly be an approach to not focus time on?

Recruiting Strategy 1:	Job Fair
Interested Candidates/Initial Referrals	3
Candidates Who Responded to Follow Up Outreach	2
Number of Candidates Interviewed	2
Number of Candidates Hired	1

Recruiting Strategy 2:	LinkedIn
Interested Candidates/Initial Referrals	0
Candidates Who Responded to Follow Up Outreach	0
Number of Candidates Interviewed	0
Number of Candidates Hired	0

Recruiting Strategy 3:	Referral Bonus
Interested Candidates/Initial Referrals	5
Candidates Who Responded to Follow Up Outreach	3
Number of Candidates Interviewed	3
Number of Candidates Hired	2

- 3. Plan for the future.** Once you've reviewed your tracking tool, you can begin to eliminate the recruitment strategies that were not productive. For example, if you posted a job on LinkedIn and no one responded to the post, next time you can feel confident about saving your time and energy by skipping the job posting on LinkedIn.

Recruiting for potential (vs. Current skill set/education level)

As mentioned earlier in this guide, the ideal candidate to hire is someone who is both a:

- **“Job fit”**- meaning they have the skills and education to do the job.
- **“Organizational fit”**- meaning their values, attitudes, communication styles, and teamwork abilities match the culture of our program.

But what do we do when the ideal candidate doesn’t submit an application and our program has a job position that needs to be filled?

While we don’t ever want to hire an unqualified person simply to “meet ratios” or “have a warm body in a room”, there are times when we need to change our perspective and begin to recruit and hire for ‘potential’ rather than waiting for the perfect candidate.

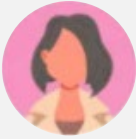
Hiring for potential means the candidate may be a good “organizational fit” (i.e., they have soft skills, like open communication, teamwork, a positive attitude, and growth mindset; you can see them connecting well with other staff in your program), but they may not have the experience working in childcare or have only generally related experience.

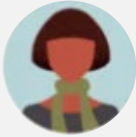
Let’s consider these two job candidates:

- **Candidate A:** Mary has been teaching preschool for the last 30 years in the next town over. When you call the former program for a reference, the employer shares that while Mary was great with the kids, she was always late to her shifts, and she would frequently demean the assistant teachers she worked with.
- **Candidate B:** Ana recently moved to town and previously worked in a restaurant for 5 years. She is looking for a new career opportunity so she can spend time in the evenings with her children. When you call her former employer, they tell you that Ana is a team player who reliably showed up to work on time and had great customer service.



Who would you hire? Why? Let's consider:

	Candidate A	Mary
	Job Fit	Experienced in childcare; can do the job.
	Organizational Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a team player • Not reliable

	Candidate B	Ana
	Job Fit	Would need training to meet requirements; has not worked in childcare before.
	Organizational Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team player • Reliable

Neither candidate is “ideal” since neither is both a good “job fit” and a good “organizational fit”. But one of these candidates may make a great hire and have a lot of transferable skills.

- **Hiring for Experience:** Many programs may hire Mary because of her experience. They may feel like they need to invest less in training Mary, and she can “get in a classroom faster”. However, if a program overlooks “red flags” when it comes to organizational fit, they will likely encounter problems down the road and be needing to re-hire for the position quickly. This costs time and resources. In this scenario, it’s recommended to follow up with Mary to better understand the critical feedback about her punctuality and teamwork, to see if there may be supports that can be offered to make this a successful candidate to hire.
- **Hiring for Potential:** If we consider “hiring for potential”, we start to see Ana is a new light. She is a good “organizational fit”, meaning she’ll transition smoothly into the program and work well with a new team. If she has an interest in learning about childcare, the program can invest in her to become a good “job fit” through offering training, mentorship, and guidance.

When we hire for potential, we focus on transferrable skills. For example, as the program considers hiring Ana, they may consider her restaurant experience. Ana is used to working in a fast-paced environment, working under pressure, and keeping a positive attitude of customer service, and following demanding health and safety regulations. All of these are transferrable and valuable skills in child care programs, where teachers work in a fast-paced environment, provide positive customer service to parents, and are required to comply with health and safety regulations.

Remember, the skills and experience needed to be successful can be taught and gained over time!

When you hire for potential, you:

- Open up the job pool to more candidates, which gives you more options in the hiring process.
- Increase your program's diversity. You may begin to consider candidates who have skills or job backgrounds you hadn't considered before, which may benefit your program and the children you serve.
- Hire people who are interested and adaptable.
- Reduce quick turnover of staff who don't fit your program's values and culture.
- Don't ignore job requirements or lower your program's standards. Instead, you focus on supporting an interested candidate in meeting requirements and standards.

Employee benefits and resources

"Why would someone want to work in my childcare program when they can earn \$2 more an hour working at the [fill in the blank business] down the street?"

We often hear this questions when we consider recruiting and hiring in childcare. It's a good question, and the goal of this section is to help you consider what employee benefits and resources your childcare program has to offer that makes it a more appealing job/career option for the job seeker.

Let's consider the following job options:

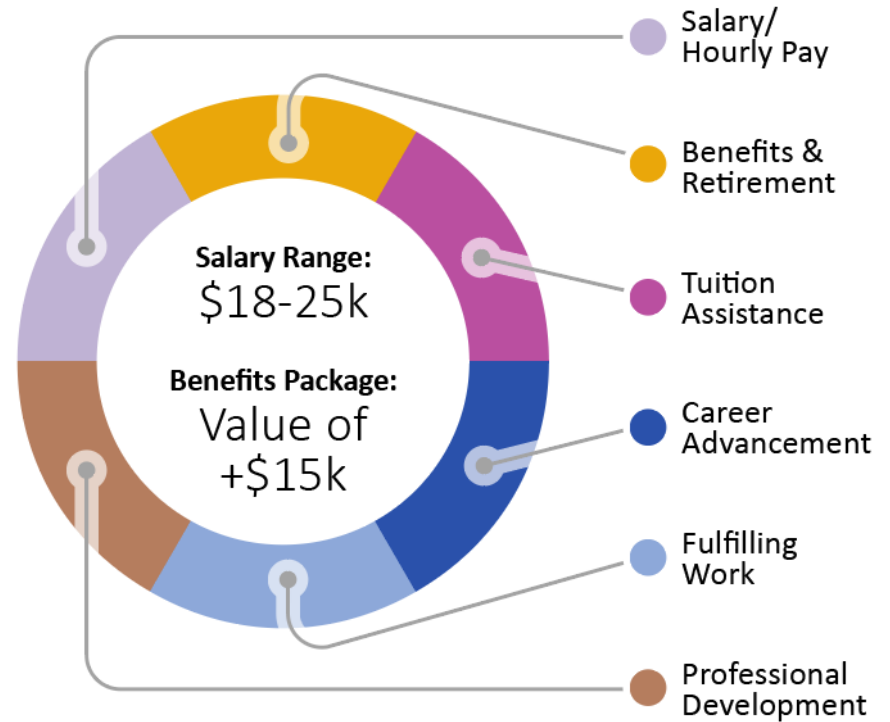
- A childcare program seeking a candidate for full time employment: 40 hours a week for \$12/hour = \$24,960 annual income
- A fast-food restaurant seeking a candidate for full time employment: 40 hours a week for \$15/hour = \$31,200 annual income

It may be easy to consider, based solely on hourly wage, that the fast-food restaurant is the better option for a job seeker, as they will earn more money.

But what this example fails to include are the benefits and resources the childcare program has to offer, which are often under advertised and quantified.

For example, the childcare program may offer:

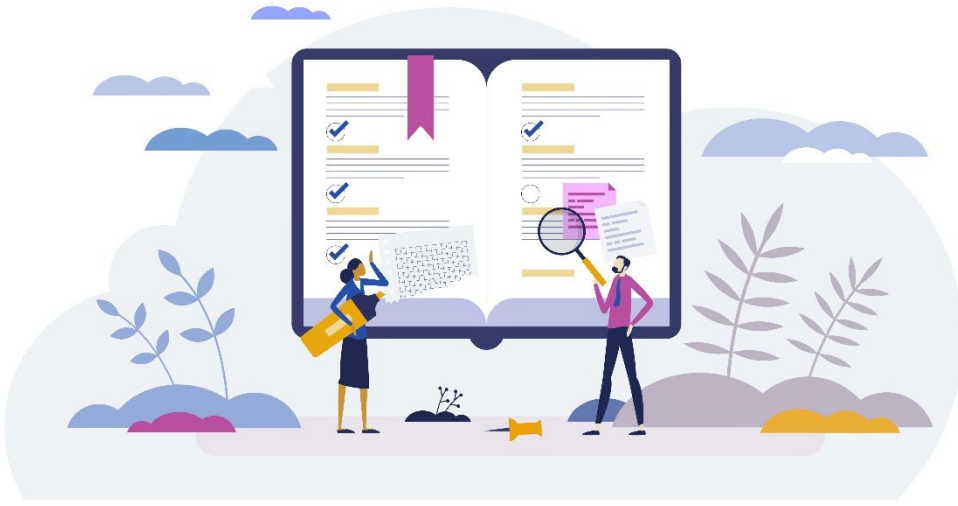
- 10 paid federal holidays throughout the year, meaning a staff is earning income on these days and not working
- Vacation/Sick Time accrual
- Medical or dental coverage, even if accessed through the federal health insurance option
- Retirement savings. This may be an employer matching program or an initial deposit to a retirement savings account as a way to get the account started.
- A paid membership to a professional development organization so they can access trainings throughout the year
- Reduced cost childcare
 - Let’s imagine the childcare program offers a 30% discount. For full-time childcare costing around \$940 a month, this would be a monthly savings of \$282 (value: \$3,384 annually).
- Free professional development; some in-state programs allow a childcare employee a CDA or bachelor’s degree free of charge. You may also have onsite job coaching opportunities or mentorships
- Clear career path/growth trajectory
 - A staff may begin as an assistant teacher and depending on their career goals can work to become a director or business owner.
- Program bonuses



When we consider the comprehensive benefits that are included in working in childcare are part of the total compensation, the offering becomes much more competitive than looking solely at an hourly wage. For example, in the graphic on this page, the childcare job may have a salary of around \$25,000 annually, but also includes a benefits package of \$15,000!

What benefits or resources does your program offer, even if they are a part of state and federal support programs?

These could include items listed above or additional offerings in your program like a “monthly gift basket raffle” or paying for mileage when attending a required training.



V. Preparing for the Hired Employee to Start

Once you've hired a candidate for your program, all of your actions influence the retention of this candidate. This means, the way you prepare for an employee to start work can influence that employee to stay at your program or leave.

Our goal is to retain employees and reduce turnover. To do so, it's important that we have thoughtfully and professionally prepared for their first days in our program and each day after.

Background record check process

Background checks and fingerprinting are an important step in the hiring process. Background checks and fingerprinting:

1. Are a requirement of state and federal law.
2. Keep children safe, by screening out individuals who should not have contact with children.
3. Protect your program from liability. If you allow an individual around children without a background check, you open your program up to lawsuits and liability.

Additional information on background checks and the finger printing process may be found online at:

[Background Checks for Childcare Personnel | New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services \(nh.gov\)](#)

Orientation plan and schedule

Before an employee's first day at your program, it's important to develop an orientation and onboarding plan. The orientation plan is how you will support the employee in becoming familiar with your program's vision, value, and culture, and provide them with details on how to do their new job.

Creating an orientation plan will help prepare:

1. **You.** You will know exactly what you want to share with the new staff, allow you to delegate the orientation if needed, set clear expectations for how things go in your program.
2. **The new staff.** They will have a clear agenda for their first days at your program, clearly understand what their role is, who they go to for help, "how things run around here".
3. **Other participating staff.** You may ask staff to 'lead' parts of the orientation, this will build their capacity for leadership, ownership in the program, build future leaders.



Take a moment to reflect:

- Does your program currently have an orientation and onboarding plan?
- If so, how effective do you think it is? Is there anything missing?
 - You may consider asking newly hired staff if there's anything they'd wished they'd known or been shown during their first days of employment.
- If you don't have an orientation and onboarding plan (or you are looking to update the plan), consider the following:
 - How do you want the employee to interact with you and other staff?
 - What values and culture norms do you want to exemplify?
 - How do you want the employee to find resources, ask for help, etc.?

The following is a sample orientation and onboarding checklist. It can be used as a reference or adapted for use in your program.

Orientation and Onboarding Checklist



- **All hiring paperwork is received**
- **Program Philosophy and Values Reviewed**
- **Tour of Program**
 - Staff lounge
 - Supplies
 - Classroom
 - Adult restroom
 - Parking
- **Meeting the Staff**
 - Introduced to Parents
 - In person
 - Newsletter/Email
 - Access
 - Keys
 - Computer
 - Phone
- **Review Role and Assignment**
 - Job Description
 - Work hours
 - Vacation/Sick Time
 - How their role fits into the program
 - Calendar
 - Establish 1-on-1 Meetings
 - Staff Meetings
 - Feedback Review Meetings
 - Program Handbook Reviewed and Signed
 - Childcare Licensing Regulations Reviewed and Signed
- **After 3-6 months**
 - Continue 1-on-1 Meetings
 - Feedback Review Meeting (Self, Peer, and Administrator)
 - Goal Setting

This checklist can be adapted to meet the needs of Family Home Providers. For example, a tour of your program might not include showing your employee where their desk or classroom is; yet they still need to know where they can work, and which areas are off-limits. Use this checklist in a way which works for you and your business.

As you think about the employee's first day, it is important to communicate the orientation and onboarding plan to the staff. Consider the following:

- After the job is accepted, confirm the start date with the employee and send them this checklist to let them know you have a plan for their first day.
- Confirm the employee knows where to go on the first day, including: where to park, what door to enter, who to ask for at the program, what time to arrive, and who to call if things don't go to plan.
- When the employee arrives for their first day, be sure to greet them when they arrive. This may mean you need to arrange additional coverage for tasks or responsibilities you have scheduled that day. (That is, what is going to inspire an employee to stay at your program if they can't find you when they start because you've been pulled into a classroom to cover for another staff?)
- Provide the employee with their orientation and onboarding plan and show them the designated place you're providing where they can store their belongings during the workday.
- If things don't go to plan or the employee doesn't show for the first day, be sure to call them to ask what happened. It may be that they had the wrong day in their calendar, or they had a flat tire on the way to the program and their phone died. You may decide to give a second chance- your business decision. If they've decided this isn't the job for them, be professional. Thank them for letting you know and wish them the best of luck. You never know when/how your paths may cross in the future or who they may refer to your program.

Peer mentoring/buddy

As a program leader, you may find yourself thinking "I don't have time to do that" or "How am I supposed to train a new staff member when my schedule is already so full". The truth about leadership is you can't do it all. So, if training or mentoring a new staff member is feeling overwhelming, it's time to think about what other leaders in your program are around you who can support!

For example, you may consider utilizing peer mentorship in your program. Peer mentorship partners a new staff with a "mentor" (another staff member) with more experience in the program. The mentor must be someone who you trust to provide the right guidance and information to the new staff, and someone who is interested in taking on this new responsibility.

Peer mentorship can be beneficial because:

- It builds relationships between the staff members. For the new staff member, they are meeting with and connecting with other staff in the program.
- It provides an opportunity for the 'mentor' to build their leadership skills and take on new roles (which for some staff builds their investment and retention in the program).

- It allows you as the program leader to delegate some responsibilities, and more effectively use your time.

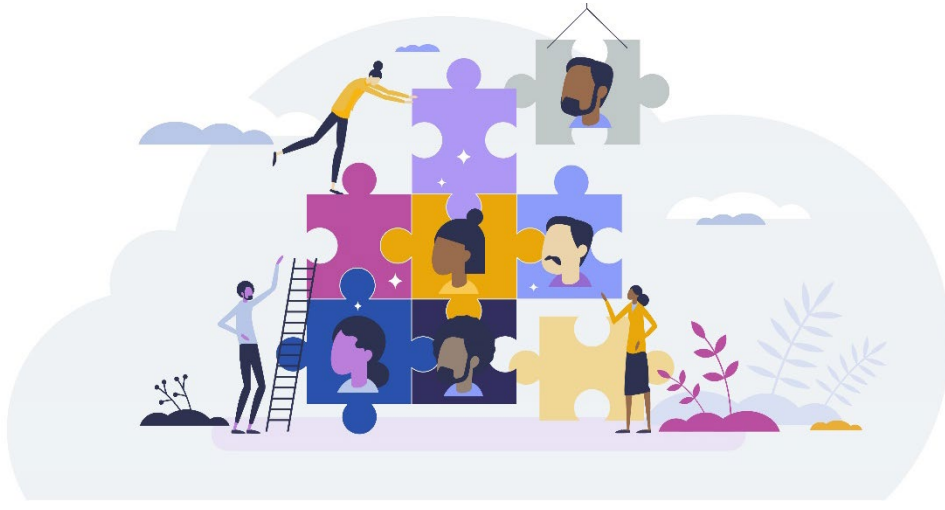
Let's reflect on the following questions:

- What could a peer mentorship program look like in your childcare program?
- Are there other staff who you can picture taking on the role of mentor?

Awareness of professional and personal supports

Offering mental health support to childcare staff helps prevent burnout and ensures educators can provide the best quality of care. It's crucial that your staff is aware of the multitude of free and affordable mental health and wellbeing resources available. The following resources help educators build healthy habits, find support through communities, and stay emotionally balanced as they nurture New Hampshire's youngest learners.

- [National Alliance on Mental Illness NH Support Groups](#): NAMI of New Hampshire offers both in-person and virtual support groups facilitated by a professional centered around a variety of topics.
- [The Ten Community Mental Health Centers](#): An organization comprised of ten community mental health centers throughout New Hampshire. Centers serve individuals in New Hampshire who are living with and recovering from mental illness and emotional disorders.
- [Happy Teacher Revolution Self-Care Starter Pack](#): 5 free online modules covering lessons like stress reduction, preventing burnout, and more.
- [Mental Health America: Protecting Your Mental Health as Teachers](#): Mental Health America's comprehensive list of strategies for teachers to prioritize their mental health.
- [Boston Public Health Commission Virtual Exercise Classes](#): No matter where you are located, join these free virtual exercise classes offered by the Boston Public Health Commission.
- [Calm: The #1 App for Meditation and Sleep](#): Explore guided meditations and ambient music for better sleep or staying calm throughout the day.
- [Talkspace Online Therapy](#): Receive support from a therapist no matter where you are located thanks to Talkspace's virtual therapy services.
- [NH YWCA Support Groups](#): Offers free, in-person support groups for domestic violence and sexual violence.
- [National Education Association: Educational Support Professional Workshop](#): This training offers simple healing skills for self-care and for promoting health and wellbeing for Educational Support Professionals (ESPs), but lessons are applicable to all types of educators.



VI. Retaining a Fabulous Staff

So, the question that we are continuously asking: what keeps people in this field?

A positive workplace culture, and early childhood community, is a big reason that people not only stay in the field, but also remain at their current employers. Creating a positive culture occurs over time rather than in one instance or after one positive interaction.

The process of changing an organization's culture requires continued efforts. To create a positive work environment, you need to be intentional with your actions. Actions influence attitudes and those attitudes become the organization's culture.

A positive workplace culture includes elements like:

1. Strong relationships
2. Work/life balance, and
3. Employee agency and voice.

Strong Relationships

Strong relationships are the foundation of a positive workplace. Setting aside time for both one-on-one and group connection between you and your staff, as well as among your staff, helps to retain employees.

Knowing what makes employees feel valued and seen is important in building relationships. One staff member may need words of affirmation to validate their efforts via a shoutout at a staff meeting, while it may embarrass another staff member to have this kind of public attention. While one staff member may appreciate help making copies or cutting the border for a display, another may be thrilled by surprise bagels in the middle of the week. Some may just want time to sit down and talk through a situation they need support navigating.

While it may seem trivial, knowing these preferences of your staff and intentionally taking action to align with these preferences can have a big impact on making employees feel welcome and valued in the workplace.

This concept of finding different ways to express appreciation for those we work with is called the 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace. If you are interested in learning more about this concept, you can pick up a copy of Gary Chapman and Paul White's book called "The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace." These 5 languages are coined as:

1. Words of affirmation
2. Quality time
3. Acts of services
4. Giving tangible gifts, and
5. Appropriate physical touch

Getting to know employees when they first start in your program is a great way to build relationships, by finding out things like their communication style, feedback preferences, interests, passion, goals, special people in their lives, what motivates them, etc.

Think about how you can engineer daily schedules and routines to allow for you and your staff to connect with each other, whether it be through games, conversation, or even quick motivational morning meetings. Bridging the relationships amongst your employees is just as important as connecting with each of them individually.

Pause & Reflect:

Take a moment to jot down some ideas for community building that you can realistically and sustainably incorporate throughout the work day!

Work/Life Balance and Overall Support

Maintaining quality childcare programs requires keeping up with administrative responsibilities and significant classroom and lesson planning. To promote a healthy work life balance for employees, as well as yourself, consider how you can set up schedules, breaks, etc. to allow for supportive collaborative planning and time for everyone to complete essential childcare administrative and planning tasks.

Staff who feel continuously supported in their role, and feel that they have the coaching, equipment, and appropriate time to do all parts of their job well will likely be more satisfied in their choice of employment and want to stay.

Some ways to consider building in this support include:

- Creating time at the beginning of the day to check in with each other and allow time for connection and collaboration.
- Utilizing an app or messaging device so that employees have a way to connect with one another for instances like needing a classroom break or extra support in the classroom.
- Organizing a special lunch and chat so that employees feel recognized, supported, and fueled for the second half of their days.



Employee Agency & Voice

In a field where the day to day can be unpredictable and somewhat hectic, creating opportunities for employee agency (that is where they have autonomy, influence, and control over their work environment) is key in creating a positive workplace culture and sense of stability, and is ultimately a large factor in employee retention.

Students at the University of Wisconsin conducted a research study to ask the question of “What motivates Early Childhood Educators to stay in the field of Early Childhood Education?” Part of the conclusion of this study was that “teachers are intrinsically motivated by personal passion and the freedom of being creative and challenging themselves as teachers. However, more time spent understanding relationships, communication, and feedback between supervisor and the educators is greatly needed in this field. Consequently, this may result in lower turnover rates and more motivated and satisfied Early Childhood Educators.”⁹ This study supports the idea of the importance of creating agency and voice, but still providing the necessary support so that employees feel they have the tools in order to achieve their visions and goals.

⁹ Nixt, S. & Gilbertson, S. (N.D.) Motivational Factors and the Early Childhood Educator. Retrieved from https://minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/75679/Nixt_ECE%20Motivations.pdf?sequence=2. University of Wisconsin-Stout

Empowering employees to problem solve and participate in decision making within their own scope of work (e.g., selecting classroom materials to purchase, designing staggered playground schedules, etc.), as well as program wide (e.g., co-creating or providing feedback on staff handbooks, co-interviewing potential new staff members) can help to create this. Creating opportunities for employee agency and voice is beneficial to everyone involved as it creates opportunities for some as well as taking away responsibilities from others, who could benefit from some extra time in their schedule.

Positioning employees as competent sense makers and “experts” communicates that they are valued and trusted to execute their work commitments and contribute to the workplace community.

Pause & Reflect:

Consider more ways that you can create opportunities for agency and voice.

Promoting Growth and Leadership Opportunities

One of the great things about the childcare field is the endless possibilities to continue evolving as a practitioner. Another way to retain employees is by offering these growth opportunities. Whether its professional development opportunities hosted by your program or opportunities through outside training agencies, helping to connect your staff with the resources available so they can continue to grow as professionals and build their personal interests will lead to greater satisfaction.

Several professional organizations that support with professional development are listed below:

- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#)
- [Childhood Education International](#)
- [The Council for Exceptional Children \(CEC\)](#)
- [Zero to Three](#)
- [Council for Professional Recognition](#)
- [ChildCare Education Institute](#)

Shared Vision

As mentioned previously, it is helpful to recruit those who share the same values and vision of your program; those who are a good “organizational fit.” It is also important to reiterate this vision and continue reinforcing these ideas and reminding people of why they do what they do even after they are hired.

To create a culture of shared values and norms that align with the vision and mission, consider taking the time to actually sit down as a group to work on developing this shared vision and goals together. Creating a shared vision involves all of those who are a part of the team, and brainstorming as a group will help everyone to feel a part of something bigger than just themselves.

A few steps you can take as you brainstorm your shared vision include:

1. Discuss and agree on your team's purpose.
2. Identify the values needed to support your team's purpose.
3. Create a picture of what it would look like if you were fulfilling your purpose and living your values consistently.
4. Set clear goals and objectives for the team to strive towards together.

The day to day of work can get monotonous and tiring, so digging into the “why” helps spark joy and re-motivate people, and reminds them of why they started and why this work matters. Finding ways to incorporate these “whys” more often helps to keep positive energy flowing. These conversations can be continued beyond any initial workshops or group meetings and having them will help remind people of the joys of their job and this field of work.

A Unique Field of Work

The early childhood education and out-of-school time workforce is a community, and that's a big factor that distinguishes this career choice from other options that are more individualistic. In joining an early childhood education and out-of-school time program, a person joins a network of early childhood professionals in New Hampshire, and becomes a part of a larger community with immediate connections to people with similar skills and interests.

Positive Offboarding

With this being said, it is important to consider this when people may leave your program. People talk within a small community, and you want to ensure the practices you are putting into place will make your program a place that is highly reputable in terms of best practices. When an employee leaves, utilizing strong processes through offboarding will help you identify ways to better motivate and retain employees, implement actionable feedback, and show employees who are leaving that you do value them and want to understand why your program may not have been the best fit. When staff members leave, you also want to understand why they are leaving so that you can incorporate this feedback into your current infrastructure. Not only does this help create a smooth goodbye, but this also gives you the opportunity to learn ways to potentially improve systems with current and future new staff. You also never know if things will align again with those who may be departing right now, so it is helpful to keep the door open if your paths cross again in the future.

Here are some suggestions for questions you may ask when offboarding employees:

- What made you start looking for another job?
- Did you feel equipped to do your job well?
- What's something we could've done better?
- Were you given clear goals and expectations for this job?
- Did you feel that you were given adequate feedback?
- What does your new position offer that influenced your decision to leave?
- Are there any other pieces of feedback you'd like to offer to us?
- What skills should the person who steps into your role have?

When having these conversations, you can certainly utilize different formats. You could send these questions ahead of time and follow up afterwards with a more formal dialogue (in person or virtually). You could also make this a more casual and natural conversation. The important things to get out of this conversation are why it didn't work out and what you can do better to keep people at your program. As a reminder, it is important to keep an open mind, and use this time to listen, rather than share your own perspective.

To summarize, when people leave, you want them to leave having positive things to say about your program because word of mouth is probably one of the number one recruitment methods you have. Leaving things on positive terms is the best thing that you can do for your program's reputation.

Checking in on Current Staff

As mentioned before, it is important to check in with staff who are remaining with the program during times of transition.

During times of transition, it is important to remember to check in on current staff to see how they are doing. When people are constantly leaving a work environment, morale can drop. Make sure to see how people are doing with this change and make sure to highlight any positives in the situation. Point out the contributions of those who have left and acknowledge all the good things that are still happening, as well as any plans to improve, or opportunities for growth and new opportunities moving forward.

One of your priorities as a leader is to build up the reputation of your program as a place where people want to work. Things like bad mouthing past employees, or current employers, is something that you should always keep an eye and an ear out for, as this will jeopardize the reputation and environment you are trying to create.

Facing the Competition in the Field

There may be other programs that have benefits or perks that you don't have, and that is okay. In order to be the best program you can be, take note of the things that distinguish you from the rest, and make sure to put these into motion and live this mission day to day.

Conclusion

We hope that you have enjoyed this Workforce Recruitment Guide, and through the activities presented in this workbook, found some useful tips and suggestions for recruiting for and hiring new staff within your program. We encourage you to visit the Early Childhood Education and Out-of-School Time Workforce Recruiting and Retention (ECOST) website to learn more about additional resources available. Here you will find additional information on available professional development to support recruitment and retention, materials to support you in going to job and hiring fairs, and information on initiatives working to grow the early childhood and out-of-school time sector.

www.nh-connections.org

